

Postsecondary Career Technical Education and Economic Recovery

In a time of economic uncertainty, Career Technical Education (CTE) is an absolute must. CTE graduates are fueling our economy and keeping our citizens safe – they are health care workers and providers on the front-line; transportation, distribution and logistics professionals keeping our supply chain moving; and information technology (IT) specialists helping us connected by expanding broadband access and developing and improving virtual platforms.

Within the first three months of COVID-19 (coronavirus), over 40 million individuals filed for unemployment,¹ with job losses reported in all sectors.² As of July 2020, unemployment rate was holding at over 13 percent.³ While it is unclear what the full impact of this job loss will be as the country is only in the early stages of a major recession, it is projected that some – but not all – of these jobs will come back in one form or another. One study estimates approximately 60 percent of job loss will be temporary,⁴ while other studies predict about a quarter of job losses will be permanent.⁵

What is not in question is that the economy will look different on the other side of the recovery, with marginalized communities the most likely to be impacted, given Latino Americans have been the most likely to have hours or shifts reduced and Black Americans have been the most likely to have been laid off during this crisis.⁶

It is imperative that we continue to invest in our CTE and workforce systems to ensure individuals can gain the skills they need – when they need them – to be prepared to re-enter or advance in the post-coronavirus economy.

CTE is Responsive to Learners' Needs

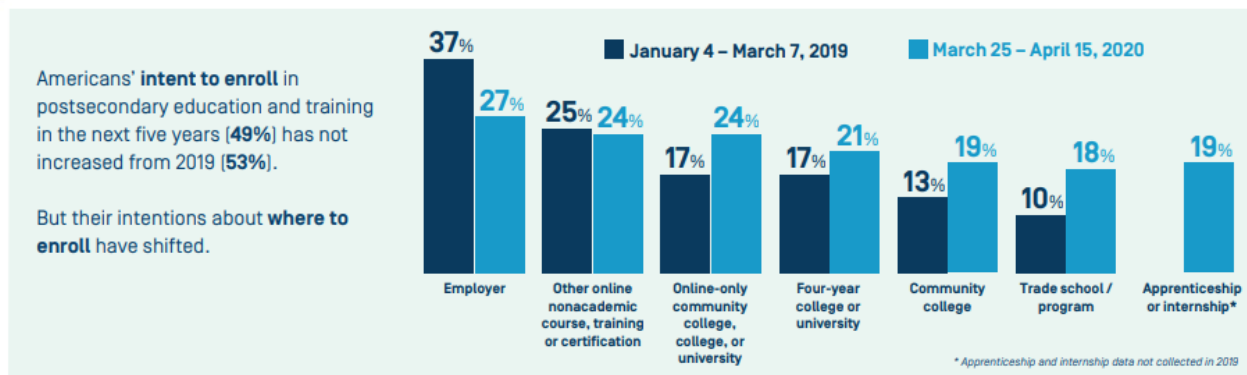
CTE serves a critical role in supporting learners in their reskilling or upskilling as they look to either re-enter the economy or grow into new opportunities. Looking at data from the last recession, the vast majority of new and replacement jobs went to individuals with more than a high school diploma, including 3.1 million jobs that went to those with associate degree or postsecondary certificates.⁷ There is growing data that suggest that those who lost their jobs due to coronavirus will pursue CTE-focused programs and degrees.

About a third of adults report that, if they lose their jobs, they would need more education to replace them. Consider:

- A third of adults also report they would potentially change careers,⁸
- Two-thirds of adults interested in enrolling in postsecondary education and training in the next six months would do so to upskill or reskill,⁹ and
- A majority of American workers say they prefer non-degree and skill-based education and training programs in today's economy.¹⁰

This all aligns with outcomes from the last recession, with over 50 percent of displaced workers changing industries when they re-entered the workforce.¹¹

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



Source: <https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-5.pdf>

Nearly three million learners already are enrolled in CTE programs at the postsecondary level – ranging from associate degrees to short-term certification programs.¹² These learners are seeing positive payoff from their education and training. For example:

- The postsecondary completion rate is nearly doubled for learners in CTE programs (56.8 percent) compared to all two-year institutions (29 percent), and
- Eighty-six percent of adult CTE learners either continue in their education or are employed within six months of completing their programs.¹³

This is likely because postsecondary CTE programs are tightly aligned with workforce needs, with 94 percent of certificates and 57 percent of associate's degrees awarded in career-oriented fields.¹⁴

CTE is Responsive to Industry's Needs and the Future of Work

What makes CTE so relevant and critical to our economy is by design. High-quality CTE programs are aligned with labor market needs. CTE programs must align with high-skill, high-wage or in-demand careers, with employers providing direct input into curricula, projects and credentials.¹⁵ This means that CTE programs have to be nimble and reflect the current and anticipated needs of industry in order to thrive.

Even before coronavirus, changing technologies, globalization and new ways of working were disrupting jobs and the skills employees need to do them. With automation, alternative work arrangements, and a necessary focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, the future of work is upon us. These shifts have been accelerated over the past months, as companies large and small have had to make necessary adjustments to function in an increasingly virtual world. This acceleration will likely impact industries in the long-term, and CTE learners will need to be prepared for both the new economy, as well as the new world of work.¹⁶

This is not new ground for the CTE system. Over its 100-plus year history, CTE has evolved and risen to meet the needs of an ever-changing economy. What began as a system focused primarily on supporting an agrarian-based economy, now encompasses all sectors of the economy, with new

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



programs launching regularly to meet emerging opportunities, such as cybersecurity, renewable energy and global logistics.¹⁷

The Need for Ongoing Investment in CTE

Over the past decade, CTE became a priority for states, local communities, the federal government, philanthropy and the private sector as a strategy to build a talent pipeline to meaningful careers for learners and to close the disconnect between our education and workforce sectors. The field has made great strides to ensure each learner has access to and can successfully complete a high-quality CTE program that is aligned with high-skill, high-wage and in-demand careers.

As states and communities continue to grapple with the harsh realities of the coronavirus and its impact on their budgets, it is imperative that CTE programs be recognized as an essential investment so that both the current and future generation gain the critical skills necessary for success in the ever-changing economy. CTE is both a proactive and responsive strategy for attending to the economic downturn – CTE programs prepare learners for lifelong success while also offering targeted skilled training for others.

Now is not the time to back away from our commitment to advancing high-quality CTE, but rather the time to double down and ensure CTE programs are available for every learner who seeks to better their own lives and opportunities.

¹ <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/05/14/coronavirus-unemployment-claims-numbers-257875>

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>

³ <https://www.dol.gov/ui/data.pdf>

⁴ <https://bfi.uchicago.edu/working-paper/covid-19-is-also-a-reallocation-shock/>

⁵ <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/covid/research-for-equity-in-recovery/how-job-training-matters.pdf?la=en>

⁶ <https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-4.pdf>

⁷ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/Americas-Divided-Recovery-web.pdf>

⁸ https://www.stradaeducation.org/publicviewpoint/?_hsmi=87120163

⁹ <https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-6.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.stradaeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Public-Viewpoint-Report-Week-5.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Addressing-Americas-Reskilling-Challenge.pdf>

¹² <https://cte.ed.gov/profiles/national-summary>

¹³ https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/documents/fact-sheets/CTE_101_June2019.pdf

¹⁴ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/subba/>

¹⁵ <https://careertech.org/resource/aligning-opportunity>

¹⁶ <https://cte.careertech.org/sites/default/files/documents/fact-sheets/CTE Prepares Learners Future Work 2020.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://careertech.org/100yrs>

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

ADVANCE CTE
State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work